CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for accessing electronic books comprising:

a file server that stores electronic books;

a controller connected to the file server for controlling access to electronic books on the file server; and

a viewer adapted for connection to the controller, which viewer displays electronic books.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller retrieves a selected electronic book from the file server and sends the selected electronic book to the viewer.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the viewer has a memory that stores the selected electronic book.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller comprises software for controlling the system.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller monitors data being transferred to the file server.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller comprises a viewing screen.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller comprises a user interface.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the user interface may be used to control the viewer.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller prevents the viewer from accessing more than one file server at the same time.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein the controller limits the number of books that can be stored or displayed on the viewer at the same time.

11. The system of claim 1, further comprising a catalog printer connected to the file server that is capable of printing information about electronic books stored on the file server.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the catalog printer is connected to the controller and titles of books are downloaded to the catalog printer.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein the electronic books have encoded text and wherein the catalog printer cannot access the encoded text.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein the viewer uses an automated timeout sequence that erases textual data for the selected electronic books after a period of time.

15. The system of claim 1, further comprising a video connector that receives a signal from a distribution system, converts the signal into electronic book files, and stores the electronic book files to the file server.

16. A viewer for viewing electronic books retrieved from a file server comprising:

a memory that stores a selected book; and

a display that displays the selected book,

wherein the memory receives the selected book from a file server, and wherein the viewer is adapted for connection to a selecting means that selects the electronic book from the file server and delivers the electronic book to the viewer.

17. The viewer of claim 16, wherein the selecting means is a controller that controls access to the file server.

18. The viewer of claim 17, wherein the controller retrieves a selected electronic book from the file server and sends the selected electronic book to the viewer.

19. The viewer of claim 17, wherein the controller monitors data being transferred to the file server by the converter.

20. The viewer of claim 17, wherein the controller prevents the viewer from accessing more than one file server at the same time.

21. The viewer of claim 17, wherein the controller limits the number of books that can be stored or displayed on the viewer at the same time.

22. The viewer of claim 16, wherein the viewer uses an automated timeout sequence that erases textual data for the selected electronic books after a period of time.

22. The viewer of claim 16, wherein the file server receives electronic book files from a video connector that receives a signal from a distribution system, converts the signal into electronic book files, and stores the electronic book files to the file server.

23. A method for distributing electronic books from a vendor to a purchaser comprising:

selecting an electronic book from the file server;

downloading the selected book to a viewer; and

storing the selected book in a memory of the viewer.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising providing a menu catalog that displays titles of the books on the file server.

25. The method of claim 23, further comprising deleting the selected book from the memory after a specified period of time.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the step of selecting comprises using a controller to access the file server.

27. The method of claim 23, further comprising connecting the viewer to a controller to access the file server.

28. The method of claim 23, further comprising determining whether the viewer is connected to another file server, and if the viewer is connected to another file server, preventing the viewer from accessing the file server.

29. The method of claim 23, further comprising determining how many electronic books are stored in the memory of the viewer, and if the number of electronic books stored on the viewer exceeds a maximum number, preventing the viewer from downloading additional electronic books from the file server.